MIT's Oldest and Largest Newspaper

thetech.com

The Tech

Established 1881

Volume 140, Number 44

Thursday, January 21, 2021

WEATHER, p. 2

THU: 35°F | 29°F
Partly sunny.

FRI: 41°F | 26°F
Mostly sunny.

SAT: 31°F | 18°F
Mostly sunny.

JOANNA LIN — THE TECH

Limited top-optionality practices will be permitted in Random and East Campus after pandemic emergency ends.

Undergrad move-in possibly delayed until March

Students not approved to access campus may receive one COVID-19 test each week

By Shelley Choi
ASSOCIATE NEWS EDITOR

The start of in-person instruction for the spring semester may be delayed to March 15 and undergraduate move-in to March 6, Chancellor Cindy Barnhart PhD '88 announced in an email to undergraduates Jan. 15. Other dates such as the start of the semester, final exam week, and Commencement will not be impacted.

The development of the contingency plans comes as "positive cases and death tolls are on the rise" and in case "state and federal guidance becomes more restrictive" in the coming weeks, Barnhart wrote.

Though Barnhart hopes the back-up plan will not be necessary, "it's critical that students and families make their travel arrangements as flexible as possible." A final decision will be made no later than Jan. 26.

The two-week delay to the start of in-person instruction and three-week delay to the undergraduate move-in weekend are listed as a possible alternative in the contingency plans.

Barnhart also announced in the email that both MIT undergraduate and graduate students living in the Greater Boston area will be given access to the MIT Covid-19 testing program regardless of whether or not students are "approved for campus access during the spring semester."

Students who are "not currently approved to access campus facilities" can use the Covid Pass application to "receive up to one test per week at an MIT Covid-19 testing location at no charge" starting Jan. 19. However, testing once per week will "not qualify students to access campus facilities beyond MIT Medical testing sites."

The decision came due to knowledge that "students with and without campus access interact with one another." For example, "some off-campus students in Covid Pass live with students who do not have campus access or testing privileges." "Expanding" the testing program would allow the health protection of "more MIT community members."

Barnhart wrote that MIT remains "committed to the spring framework" of bringing first years, sophomores, and juniors back to campus as previously outlined, though "colleges and universities across the country are altering their spring semesters or engaging in contingency planning." Stanford University reversed plans to invite first years and sophomores for the winter quarter Jan. 9.

IN SHORT

Finalized on-campus housing **move-in dates** to be announced by Jan. 26.

Pre-registration for spring classes will continue until Jan. 29.

Independent Activities Period concludes on Jan. 29.

Interested in **joining *The Tech***? Email *join@tech.mit.edu.*

Send news and tips to *news@tech.mit.edu.*

Top-optionality to be allowed in EC, Random

Wells: December 2020 policy announcement 'failed trans and LGBTQ students'

By Kylee Carden
STAFF REPORTER

Vice President and Dean for Student Life Suzy Nelson, on behalf of Chancellor Cynthia Barnhart PhD '88, Vice President for Human Resources Ramona Allen, and herself, wrote in an email to *The Tech* that they "have decided to allow limited top-optionality practices from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. when most staff are not working."

They previously announced the decision to prohibit top and full clothing optionality, except for "a limited number of clothing-optional events," in a December 2020 email to the Random Hall and East Campus communities.

Nelson wrote in her email to *The Tech* that she, Barnhart, and Allen "unequivocally support gender equity and the needs of non-binary and trans students" and "agree with students that this issue is as important as the need to create a welcoming and safe environment for staff or other community members."

They added that other restrictions still exist, such as top-optionality being limited to EC and Random and being placed "on hold until after the pandemic emergency ends."

Students "believed they would be able to implement top-optionality if given the opportunity, while still providing a welcoming environment for staff," Nelson wrote.

Students had expressed disappointment with the December 2020 policy announcement and have spoken out in favor of clothing optionality.

Sophia Diggs-Galligan '22 said in an interview with *The Tech* that "clothing optionality is not the addition of something; it's the absence of bodies being policed."

Ether Bezugla '22 said in an interview with *The Tech* that they were "attracted to MIT by the culture that forms around clothing optionality."

Tesla Wells G said in an interview

Clothing, Page 2

SUPERLIMINAL

A game for you to live the dream, or rather, live many dreams. **ARTS, p. 3**

SECTIONS

Arts 3
Fun Pages 4

The Tech
Established 1881

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WEATHER

Cold and boring, except for some exciting gales

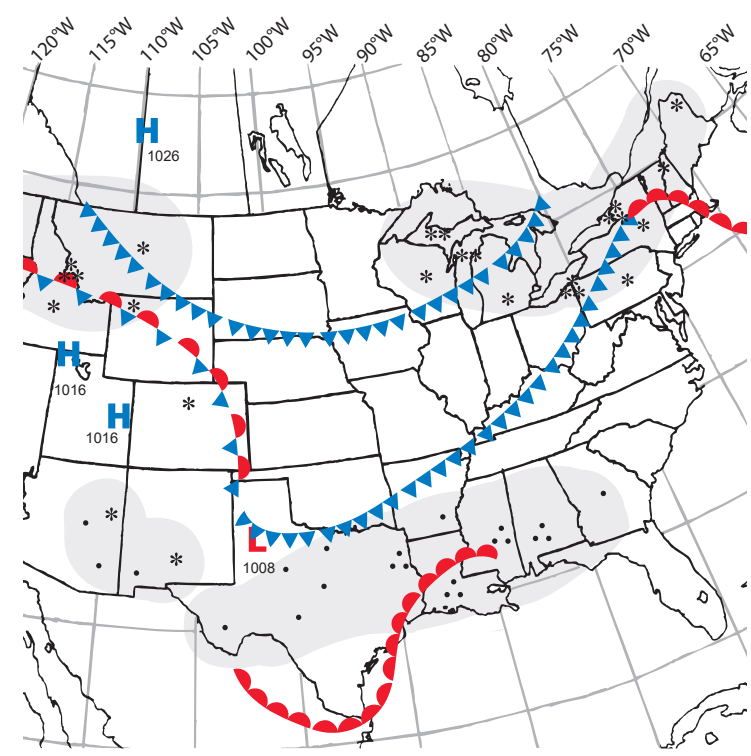
By Sophia Fang and Ophelia Zhu

We are now deep into January and the greater Boston area has been cold and sadly snowless for the most part. There have been possibilities of light snow showers the past week and into the next, but nothing heavy enough to last and thoroughly enjoy. Friday night will bring in a cold front and blustery (a fun word for breezy!) weekend conditions. Although the outdoors has hardly been a winter wonderland, in western Massachusetts, the weather has been warm enough to go outside and take some long hikes in the fresh air.

Recently, it seems like gale winds around 40 mph have been blowing in both the east and west coast. The winds have knocked over trees and tall building signs and have even swept a few people away by the beach in California. Make sure to keep an eye out for these strong winds!

Extended Forecast

Today: Partly sunny, with a high near 35°F (1°C). Southwest wind 8 to 11 mph.
Tonight: Partly cloudy, with a low around 29°F (-2°C). Southwest wind 6 to 8 mph.
Tomorrow: Mostly sunny, with a high near 41°F (5°C) and low near 26°F (-3°C). West wind 7 to 9 mph.
Saturday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 31°F (-1°C) and a low around 18°F (-8°C). Northwest wind around 15 mph, with gusts as high as 26 mph.
Sunday: Sunny, with a high near 31°F (-1°C) and low near 22°F (-6°C). Northwest wind around 17 mph, with gusts as high as 29 mph.



Situation for Noon Eastern Time, Thursday, January 21, 2021

Weather Systems	Weather Fronts	Precipitation Symbols			Other Symbols
			Snow	Rain	
H High Pressure	Trough	Showers	*	•	Fog
L Low Pressure	Warm Front	Light	*	•	Thunderstorm
§ Hurricane	Cold Front	Moderate	**	••	Haze
	Stationary Front	Heavy	⁂	∴	Compiled by MIT Meteorology Staff and The Tech

SPRC recommendations not accepted in Dec. 2020 email

Clothing, from Page 1

with *The Tech* that the December 2020 policy announcement had "failed trans and LGBTQ students" and noted that MIT makes logistical accommodations to prevent staff from encountering nudity in spaces such as locker rooms.

Senior Associate Dean of Residential Education Judy Robinson and Senior Associate Dean of Housing and Residential Services David Friedrich wrote in an email November 2019 to EC residents that they "received reports of two separate incidents involving nudity in front of MIT workers that may have violated Institute policy."

These incidents led to a moratorium on clothing optionality announced Feb. 5, 2020. The Student Policy Review Committee (SPRC) was then formed to make a recommendation on clothing optionality, with the moratorium to remain in place until SPRC concluded its review and made a policy recommendation.

MIT's policy since 2018 had allowed top and full clothing optionality on various floors of EC and Random outside of working hours.

The SPRC report concluded that while "current clothing optionality practices provide students with safe and comfortable living communities for those that opt-in," "employees who work in residence halls that practice clothing optionality do not have a safe and comfortable work environment."

The SPRC presented three options: the continuation of top and full clothing optionality with parameters, the cessation of clothing optionality practices, or the allowance of top-optionality only.

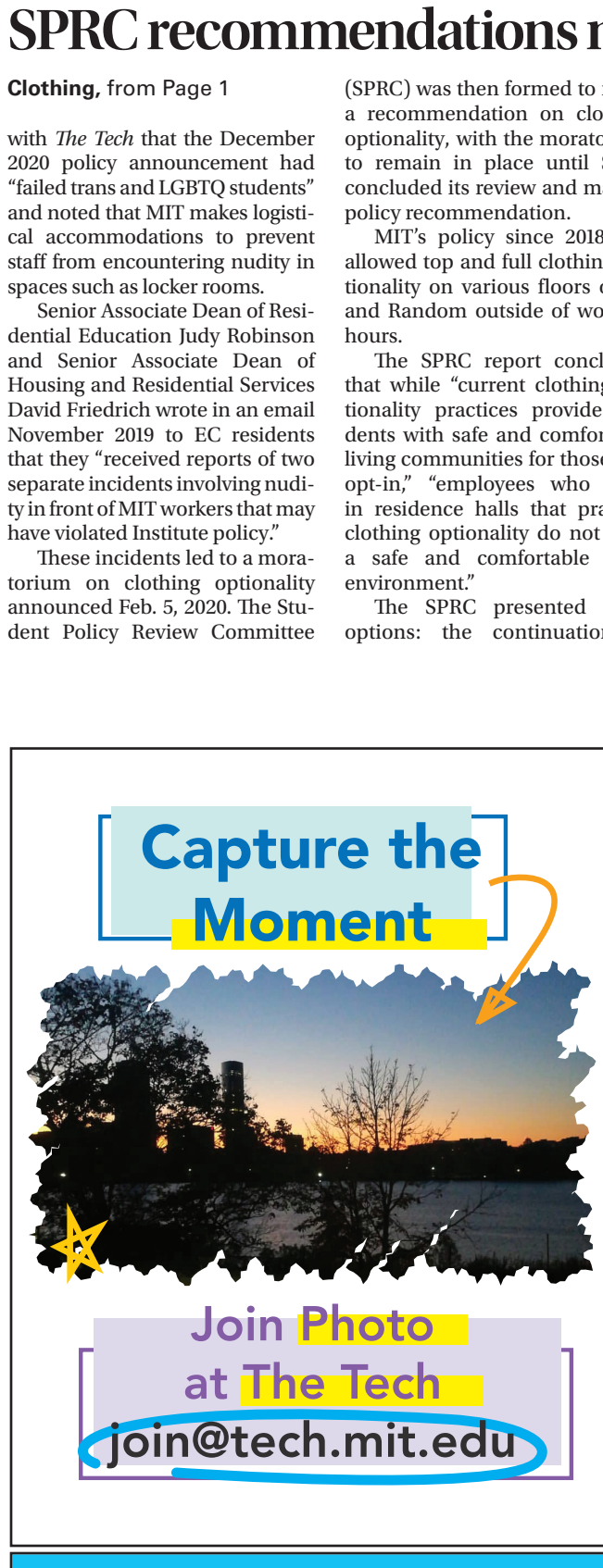
The SPRC recommended top-optionality as a "compromised measure" that "can promote a safer environment for staff" and the continuation of "consensual opt-in events" involving clothing optionality.

The December 2020 email stated that the SPRC recommendation to permit toplessness was not accepted because "it does not meet MIT's obligation by law to provide a safe and welcoming workplace and living environment for students, faculty, staff, and contractors" and stated that MIT "cannot let the current status quo continue."

The email noted that the timing of this announcement was "not ideal" but that the pandemic had delayed decision-making and given students one-day notice of a Zoom meeting that would allow them to speak with administrators and share their concerns.

Nelson wrote in her email to *The Tech* that she, Barnhart, and Allen "decided to support the SPRC recommendation" after they "reflected" on the conversation with EC and Random students and had "further conversations in late December and January with the communities' house teams and student leaders."

Editor's Note: Ether Bezugla was a staff photographer for The Tech.



Solution to Gander

from page 4

4	9	6	7	2	8	1	5	3
5	8	2	3	1	4	7	9	6
7	1	3	6	9	5	2	8	4
9	2	4	1	7	6	8	3	5
1	3	8	5	4	2	9	6	7
6	7	5	9	8	3	4	1	2
2	5	9	8	6	7	3	4	1
8	6	7	4	3	1	5	2	9
3	4	1	2	5	9	6	7	8

Solution to Tuber

from page 4

5	6	2	4	1	3
6	1	3	5	2	4
2	3	5	1	4	6
4	5	1	3	6	2
1	2	4	6	3	5
3	4	6	2	5	1

Solution to Game Over

from page 4

■	A	L	M	A	■	A	L	P	H	A	■	O	L	D
E	P	E	E	S	■	N	O	S	I	R	■	B	I	O
N	I	N	T	H	I	N	N	I	N	G	■	S	E	T
D	E	N	S	■	D	E	E	■	T	O	G	O	■	■
E	C	O	■	S	I	X	■	V	A	N	I	L	L	A
D	E	N	T	E	D	■	P	E	T	■	F	E	A	R
■	■	■	R	A	I	S	I	N	■	A	T	T	I	C
■	F	O	U	R	T	H	Q	U	A	R	T	E	R	■
B	L	I	S	S	■	R	U	S	S	I	A	■	■	■
B	E	N	T	■	T	E	E	■	L	A	G	E	R	S
C	A	T	E	R	E	D	■	H	E	S	■	M	E	L
■	■	M	E	A	T	■	T	I	E	■	E	A	V	E
A	T	E	■	T	H	I	R	D	P	E	R	I	O	D
B	E	N	■	E	E	R	I	E	■	M	I	L	L	S
C	A	T	■	D	R	A	G	S	■	T	E	S	T	■

Solution to Mystery

from Issue 43

S	A	N	T	A	■	■	R	E	E	K	■	L	A	P
A	S	B	A	D	■	M	E	L	E	E	■	U	M	A
N	O	A	M	C	H	O	M	S	K	Y	■	P	A	C
K	L	E	E	■	E	R	I	E	■	I	C	A	N	T
■	O	R	D	E	R	I	N	■	O	N	E	■	■	■
■	■	■	L	O	A	D	I	N	G	D	O	C	K	■
C	L	I	P	S	■	■	S	K	Y	■	A	C	L	U
R	E	L	E	A	S	E	■	E	X	E	R	T	E	D
O	S	S	O	■	E	M	O	■	■	S	N	A	F	U
C	H	A	R	L	E	S	V	E	S	T	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	I	A	N	■	E	N	T	E	R	A	L	■
I	F	E	A	R	■	T	R	I	O	■	U	S	O	C
N	E	G	■	S	T	A	T	A	C	E	N	T	E	R
C	E	O	■	E	R	D	O	C	■	C	U	R	I	A
A	T	S	■	N	A	A	N	■	■	O	P	O	L	Y

DID YOUR MIT ESSAYS GET YOU IN?

The Tech is collecting successful application essays (**hint:** yours!).
Email your pieces to cl@tech.mit.edu!

VIDEO GAME REVIEW

Perception is reality

When forced lucid dreaming goes wrong

★★★☆☆

Superliminal

Developed and published by Pillow Castle Games

Available on Nintendo Switch, PS4, Xbox One, Linux, MacOS, and Windows

By Nathan Liang
PUBLISHER

Imagine you wake up in a plain room with nothing but a table and a terms of service form ready for you to sign. Perplexed, you sign and proceed out of the room. Soon after, a calm feminine voice speaks to you over the PA system, congratulating you on falling asleep and welcoming you to SomnaSculpt technology's dream therapy session. As you continue, the overhead speaker advises you to look at things from a new perspective. It'll be the key to you progressing through the dream and helping you cope with the problems of your conscious life.

However, you don't even finish the first dream when you notice the orderly rooms don't seem very well crafted. You find your way down a side path and get a warning that you should proceed back to the orientation room but ignore it and continue onwards. Your actions set off some warnings. The calm voice tries to guide you back to the correct path or occasionally issue error warnings. Another voice, that of Dr. Glenn Pierce, attempts to reach you as you descend into more dream layers. He informs you of their progress (or lack thereof) in tracking you within the dreamscape and tries to help you wake up as best as he can.

Tonally, *Superliminal* reminds me of *The Stanley Parable*, where the protagonist explores a mysteriously empty office building at the behest (or in spite) of an omniscient narrator. The *Superliminal* player doesn't have as much freedom as *The Stanley Parable* player, but both games give a vibe of constant unnerve and the story spiraling into nonsense. The aesthetic of the games' graphics are also similar.

Gameplay-wise, *Superliminal* is a fun mind exercise. Your perception of objects changes their size and how they can be oriented in a given level. For example, say you're given a standard rubber duck. If you pick it up and lift it so that it's way above your head and then let go of it, the rubber duck will fall and drop the size of a bathtub. This manipulation is not only limited to the objects you interact with, but it extends to yourself as well, adding another level of thinking to the puzzles.

As the dream layers increase, the surroundings become more abstract, and the developers took care to craft a different ambiance for each level. The one level I found most compelling was Blackout, which perfectly emulates the horror game experience. In stark contrast to most other levels in *Superliminal*, the Blackout level is constantly swathed in darkness. The few paltry sources of light you do get reveal bloody handprints and gruesome blood trails, and I braced for a jumpscare at every turn.

COURTESY OF PILLOW CASTLE GAMES

The alarm clock is a recurring, guiding motif in *Superliminal*.

Beyond that, there isn't anything that particularly sets *Superliminal* apart from other first-person puzzle games. It's a fun, relatively short game that is interesting to play through. If you seek other games that truly challenge your brain, I'd recommend *Return of the Obra Dinn* or *Gorogoa*.

101 THINGS TO DO
BEFORE YOU GRADUATE
32. Take a stroll through Little Italy in the North End
Join the Arts department at The Tech and write restaurant reviews.
(And get reimbursed for your meal!)

FUNFUNFUNF